

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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R 270648Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3111
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMCONSUL SURABAYA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: BOAT ARRIVALS AND AUSTRALIAN PROGRAM

REF: (A) KUALA LUMPUR 3370; (B) CANBERRA 3155;
(C) JAKARTA 5429

1. FOUR REFUGEE BOATS CARRYING TOTAL OF 49 PEOPLE
ARRIVED IN DARWIN ON APRIL 25. BOAT NUMBERS AS FOLLOWS:
RG 0632; PRIM 319; VNKG 1049; AND RG 1107. GROUP
CONSISTS OF 29 MEN 6 WOMEN AND 14 CHILDREN.

2. REPORTS RECEIVED BY GOA IMMIGRATION INDICATE THAT
AS MANY AS 25 BOATS NOW ON THE WATER ENROUTE TO AUSTRALIA.
RUMORS GIVEN CREDENCE BY MOVEMENT OF FOUR BOATS WITH
APPROXIMATELY 186 REFUGEES ABOARD DISCUSSED REFTLES B
AND C. SOME OF THESE REFUGEES BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN
EFUSED UNDER AUSTRALIAN PROGRAM AND IN DEFIANCE OF
REJECTION SET SAIL FOR AUSTRALIA.

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3. OFFICIAL PASSING INFORMATION COMMENTED THAT PROPOSAL
FOR ADMINSSIONS IN PERIOD FROM JULY-DECEMBER 1978 NOW
BEING PREPARED FOR CABINET APPROVAL AND CONTINUED INFLUX
OF "ILLEGAL ENTRANTS" (ESPECIALLY OF REFUGEES WHO HAD
BEEN REFUSED BY AUSTRALIAN IMMIGRATION AND ACCEPTED BY
THIRD COUNTRY) COULD HAVE DEFINITE INFLUENCE ON CABINET

DECISION. (NOTE: FIGURE MENTIONED LOCALLY IS 4,000
ADMISSIONS RATHER THAN 8,000 DISCUSSED REFTEL A).

4. AUSTRALIANS HAVE MADE TREMENDOUS EFFORT IN PAST
MONTHS TO EXPEDITE PROCESSING OF REFUGEES INCLUDING
INCREASED QUOTAS, DISPATCH OF IMMIGRATION EAMS TO
CAMPS AND MOST RECENTLY ESTABLISHMENT OF SPECIAL
PROGRAMS AND REFUGEE BRANCH IN DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION
NEW BRANCH HEADED BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY IA SIMINGTON
FORMERLY OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. IT WOULD BE
UNFORTUNATE IF PROGRAM JEOPARDIZED BY CONTINUED
ARRIVAL OF REFUGEE BOATS. IN THIS CONNECTION, GOA
IMMIGRATION MOST APPRECIATIVE OF ADVANCE REPORTS OF
BOAT MOVEMENTS AND EFFORTS TO DETER BOATS FROM LEAVING
CAMPS.

5. COMMENTS: GOA IMMIGRATION FEARS RE POSSIBLE
ADVERSE EFFECT ON ENTIRE PROGRAM SHOULD UNAUTHORIZED
ARRIVALS CONTINUE NOT WITHOUT FOUNDATION. IN LATE
1977 WHEN SIMILAR INFLUX OF REFUGEES OCCURRED CALLS
WERE MADE FOR RETURN OF REFUGEES TO CAMPS AND/OR TO
REFUSE TO PERMIT BOATS TO LAND. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT
GOA WOULD FOLLOW EITHER OF THESE COURSES OF ACTION,
BUT A PUBLIC OUTCRY COULD SERIOUSLY HAMPER CURRENT
ACTIVE PROGRAM FOR ADMISSION OF REFUGEES.

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